

THE DEAD COUNCILLOR.
IN THE MOMENT OF HIS GLORY HE IS STRUCKEN.

The Death of Sir John Thompson at Windsor Last Wednesday—The Incredulity With Which the News Was Received—Laurier's Tribute.

A strong link of sympathy bound two lands together when, on Wednesday last, the world learned of the death of Canada's chief in the hour of his greatest glory.

A more sad death could scarcely be imagined. Shortly after the oath taken by the privy councillors of the United Kingdom had been administered to him by the queen in person, the end came.

It is an imposing ceremony, that of swearing in a privy councillor before the queen and the court and many of the great men of the empire. The queen gave Canada's premier a most gracious reception, referring to him as a successor to the late Sir John A. Macdonald, not only in office, but in the "loyal and courageous policy" of finding the Dominion nearer to the other portions of the British empire.

When Sir John left London for her majesty's residence in Windsor on the morning

Lady Aberdeen offered to go to Ottawa and personally express to the bereaved widow her excellency's sympathy. As Lady Thompson has intimated to the Countess of Aberdeen that such a visit should be much appreciated, her excellency at once left for Ottawa. Their excellencies met Sir John on the occasion of their first visit to Canada in a private capacity in 1890 and a very close and intimate friendship subsisted between them. The following cablegram was received by the governor-general from Lord Rosebery: "Please express to your government my deepest regret at the grievous calamity which has deprived the dominion of its eminent premier."

Ottawa was naturally the place to which all Canada looked for confirmation or denial of the report of the premier's death. And yet Ottawa got its first information from precisely the same sources as St. John. Hon. Mackenzie Bowell, the acting premier, first heard the sad news from his messenger. "It cannot be true," he said. "It is a mere rumor." But authoritative messages soon began to pour in, and when Sir Charles Tupper's despatch, beginning "You will all be shocked to learn that our

question and the strong pressure recently brought to bear on the imperial government against the Canadian act had undoubtedly led to many hours of anxiety for Sir John when in London.

It was announced that the Canadian premier would sail for home on the 13th instant to reach if possible Ottawa for Christmas.

An intimate friend of the deceased premier says that Sir John, while in possession of the faculty of the suppression of emotions, was an intensely nervous disposition and was doubtless affected by the events of Wednesday, as few men in like circumstances could hardly fail to be. Sir John will be buried in the Holy Cross cemetery at Halifax, where lie the bodies of two or three of the dead premier's children.

The 11th of December, 1844, was a day of rejoicing to John Sparrow Thompson and wife, for on that day John Sparrow David Thompson, the future premier of Canada and member of the privy council of Great Britain, was born in the city of Halifax. His father was a native of Ireland, and his mother, once Miss Charlotte Pottinger, was born in Scotland. Many speakers and writers have pointed out the benefits of being Scotch-Irish extraction, but the future Sir John was especially to be congratulated, as he was of Scotch-Irish parentage. His early education was received in the Halifax common schools and the Free Presbyterian Church Academy. He was called to the bar in 1865, and was appointed a Q. C. in 1879. He served as alderman in Halifax for six years, and for five years he was a member of the board of school commissioners in that city. For some time he was chairman of the degree conferring college, the University of Halifax, a member of its senate. In all these minor positions, as in the greater ones to which he was afterwards called, he exhibited the same wisdom and discretion which made him a power in the land.

Sir Charles Tupper was evidently right when he said, in proposing Mr. Thompson as judge of the supreme court, that he was undoubtedly the ablest lawyer in Nova Scotia. He was for a long time honorary lecturer in Dalhousie law school on evidence and the construction of statutes.

Mr. Thompson entered political life in 1877, at the age of thirty three, entering the house by being chosen in a by-election as a member for Antigonish. The Hill government was then in power, and Mr. Thompson was on an opposition bench. When the general election was held in the following year a new government came into power, of which Mr. Holmes was premier and Mr. Thompson was attorney-general. This is known in Nova Scotia history as the "Holmes-Thompson government." Before this conservative government's defeat in 1882, Mr. Thompson had become premier upon the retirement of Mr. Holmes. Soon after the defeat of the government, Mr. Thompson was appointed a judge of the supreme court.

In 1885, Sir John was elected to represent Antigonish in the house of commons, and became minister of justice in the cabinet of Sir John A. Macdonald. He was re-elected for the same country in 1887 and 1891. On the death of Sir John Macdonald he refused the premiership, but became leader of the house. In 1888 he was knighted for his services on behalf of the British government before the fisheries commission at Washington in 1887. On the resignation of Sir John Caldwell Abbott in 1892, Sir John became premier, a position in which he won the respect of all parties. His recent services in the Behring sea arbitration are still fresh in the minds of the public. Sir John was married to Miss Annie E. Afflick of Halifax. He leaves five children, one of them being a student in the law office of Dalton McCCarthy.

"Reclaimed."

The theatre-goers of St. John, who remember with much pleasure the appearance of the Waller Hopper Co. here some two years ago, in the powerful comedy-drama "Reclaimed," will be pleased to learn that this company opens in Mechanic's Institute for a short season commencing Monday, 17th inst., playing Reclaimed, with Mr. Hopper and Miss Robinson in the title roles. Mr. Hopper is a Canadian comedian, and one of whom Canada has no reason to be ashamed, and Miss Robinson is a old favorite here. This feature of the performance will undoubtedly prove a drawing card.

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In The Style. Since "Kit's" letter in the Toronto Mail referring to a St. John girl's hat, the young ladies of this city, indignant at Kit's citing one instance out of many different ones, have taken particular care to wear

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SIR JOHN S. D. THOMPSON.

of the fatal day, he had complained of feeling unwell, saying that he had very little sleep during the night. After leaving the royal presence for the lunch-room in the castle it was evident that the excitement of the ceremony had told upon him, and he renewed his complaint of the morning that he was not feeling well. After talking his piece at the table, he could not eat, but asked to be excused from the table. He was led by one of the attendants to the writing room, which is next to the lunch-room. There the premier sat down on a couch and leaned forward upon his hands. He seemed to be in intense pain, and was greatly agitated. Suddenly he partly rose from his couch, appearing to grope in darkness, then he utterly collapsed, and fell back in a swoon from which he never rose.

The attendant gave the alarm, and the room was filled with the excited ministers. A physician was hastily summoned but before he reached the premier's side, life had fled. A few minutes later, and not only Windsor, but all England, and later, all the world, was shocked by the intelligence that Canada's premier was dead.

To those who had heard him make an eloquent appeal at the Colonial Institute the night before, the news was a great surprise. It is true, however, that the premier did not seem altogether well and curtailed his speech, saying that he was unable to do justice to the theme of the Ottawa conference. Many probably took this as a figure of oratory.

Before the meeting the premier had dined at the institute and appeared at that time to be in the best of health and spirits. He greeted Lord Rosebery and other friends with the utmost cordiality, and joined the company in a chat over a friendly cup of coffee in the evening.

The news was kept from the queen as long as possible, as she has been unwell lately. Her majesty was greatly shocked at the death of one of her empire's leading statesmen, and sent a sympathetic cablegram to Lady Thompson.

In the usually staid quarters of diplomatic Downing street there was great excitement, as there was through all the city of London. Only the day before Sir John had had a conference at the foreign office with the Marquis of Ripon, colonial secretary, upon the question of Canadian copyright. He was known and respected through the metropolis for his recent services in the Behring Sea arbitration, and he had roused much interest by his remarks of the evening before at the Colonial Institute.

At Montreal there has never been such intense excitement as at Sir John Thompson's demise since the tragic death of D'Arcy McGee. At the vice-regal residence the flag was hoisted at half-mast, and Lord and Lady Aberdeen hastened to send messages of sympathy to Lady Thompson.

dear friend, Sir John Thompson, died at Windsor castle today," arrived, Mr. Bowell laid the despatch on the desk and burst into tears. His two colleagues, Hon. Messrs. Costigan and Foster, who were with him, were also very much affected.

Shortly after Sir Charles's despatch came, Douglas Stewart, the dead premier's private secretary, entered the room. He had just left Lady Thompson, and was asked to return with Mr. Bowell and Mr. Foster to break the sad news. But the news had already been harshly broken by some thoughtless idiot. Having heard the news up town, called up the premier's late residence by telephone and asked if any news had been received of Sir John's death. It was a trying hour for the stricken widow until the final intelligence came. The grief of Lady Thompson and her family as the terrible truth finally dawned on them is far too sacred a thing to parade before the world. Whatever Sir John Thompson was to his country he was infinitely more to his wife and children.

Hon. Wilfrid Laurier, who was seen by a press representative at Montreal soon after the news came, seemed much affected at the loss of one who was his friend, although his leading opponent. Mr. Laurier said: "To me as well as to everyone else the sudden death of Sir John Thompson has been even more than a shock. Ever since he entered parliament and especially since he took the leadership of the conservative party after the death of Sir John Macdonald, my relations with him, though purely official, have always been of a most agreeable character. In the transaction of business on the floor of the house of commons, I always had every reason to be satisfied with the manner he treated his friends and opponents. Of course I gave no views to express as to the position he occupied in the ranks of his party, but I am sure his loss will be mourned by every one of his followers. Everyone is familiar with the great qualities he displayed as a public man and our political history offers no example of such a rapid rise as that which marked the career of Sir John Thompson."

Sir John left New York for London by the steamship Majestic on October 31st, reaching London November 7th, in good health. His death at that time seemed a remote contingency. Sir John's trip to Rome was said to be one of a sight-seeing character. Altogether Sir John was on the continent some three weeks, returning to London again on November 29th. Since then he has been more or less busily engaged in business with the colonial office and other cares of a semi-official nature.

Some people may have thought that the premier has been away simply on a holiday trip, but in London he had to put in some hard work. No man has fought so energetically as he on behalf of the Canadian publishing interests on the copyright